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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 001465

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EB/CBA (MERMOUD) AND EUR/WE
COMMERCE FOR 534 BIS
COMMERCE ALSO FOR MAC/EUR, USFCS/ADVOCACY
SECDEF FOR USDATL/IC, USDP, AND USDP/DSCA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/29/2015

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SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR PRESIDENTIAL ADVOCACY ON GE PROPULSION
OFFER FOR FRENCH-ITALIAN SHIP PROJECT

REF: PARIS 2902

Classified By: Ambassador Mel Sembler for Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d)

1. (C) Action Request: Embassy Rome seconds Embassy Paris' recommendation (reftel) that it would be helpful to have President Bush send an advocacy letter to Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, in addition to French President Jacques Chirac, in support of General Electric's bid to provide the propulsion system for the joint French-Italian Multi-Mission Frigates (FREMM). ODC contacts within the Italian Ministry of Defense have indicated that they believe UK Prime Minister Tony Blair has advocated directly with Berlusconi on behalf of GE's competitor, Rolls Royce. We cannot independently verify such contacts, however.

2. (SBU) We believe an advocacy letter should emphasize GE's partnership with the U.S.-Italian firm Avio to supply the engine turbines for the FREMM project, which would contribute positively to Italian employment. We are unaware of any benefits to Italian workers that would follow a decision to choose Rolls Royce to supply the propulsion systems.

3. (C) Embassy Rome has been working with GE for several years to support their bid on the FREMM propulsion system. Italian navy contacts have told us recently, however, that the navy is concerned that the GE engines may not meet their technical specifications with regard to power (the Italian navy would prefer engines capable of reaching 28 knots or more).

SEMBLER

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